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Fourth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 87th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 28 September 1993, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mrs. BELEMBAOGO

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 44 OF THE CONVENTION (agenda item 8)

Initial report of El Salvador (CRC/C/3/Add.9) (continued)

1. The CHAIRPERSON invited the Salvadorian delegation to resume their places at the Committee table and to reply to the questions asked orally by the members of the Committee at the preceding meeting.

2. Mr. MENDOZA (El Salvador), replying to the questions concerning the sexual abuse of Salvadorian children, said that that phenomenon was attributable in part to the armed conflict that had been waged in that country, during the course of which many people had lost their sense of moral values, and in part to the socially prevalent attitude of machismo. The Salvadorian Government was taking steps to make the public aware of such problems, in particular through the Office of the Government Procurator for the Defence of Human Rights and the Deputy Government Procurator for the Defence of the Rights of the Child. A campaign to combat incest had been launched, with the participation of the country's First Lady. Treatment was provided to child victims of sexual violence by social workers and psychologists. More competent, trained professionals were needed, however, and persons caring for young children should be made aware of such problems.

3. The table that appears at the top of page 33 of the initial report indicated that those responsible for abuse were more often mothers than fathers. That could perhaps be partly attributed to the fact that mothers were often heads of families. It should in any case be noted that for reasons that remained largely unexplained, women played a role in perpetuating machismo; that point had been stressed at a seminar in which he had participated.

4. Turning to the question of the Salvadorian refugees, particularly those in Honduras who had lost their identification papers during the armed conflict, and pointedly those in Honduras, he stated that a law had been enacted setting out a procedure by which those persons could regularize their status. It should in that context be noted that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had greatly assisted El Salvador in enforcing that law and repatriating its refugees.

5. Furthermore, a broad information campaign had been launched, principally through the press, urging voters without identity papers to apply for them so that they could register to vote and take part in the general elections scheduled for 20 March 1994.

6. Concerning the placement of a child in a Child Care Centre (para. 98 of the report), such a step was taken in the best interests of the child on a temporary basis; he could be reintegrated into the family as soon as it could provide him with living conditions that would guarantee his full development.

7. Furthermore, an adoption (para. 99 of the report) could be annulled by a court of law if warranted by the best interests of the child. In reply to another question he stated that the Adoption Act allowed a child aged 12 or over to offer an opinion with respect to his adoption.

8. Concerning the placement of minors in an irregular situation, as referred to in paragraph 104 of the report, firstly, such a step was taken only if warranted by the behaviour of the child, and secondly, every effort was made to reintegrate the child into his family as promptly as possible. As for school books, the Government was doing all it could to reduce their cost, so that poor families could afford to buy them. An effort was made during the early school years to supply all students with the books they needed. In reply to another question, he said that many Salvadorian families owned television sets. Finally, he pointed out that NGOs played a very significant role in child protection, and that the Salvadorian Government was anxious to pursue its cooperation with those organizations.

9. The CHAIRPERSON, thanking Mr. Mendoza for his replies to the questions of Committee members, welcomed the resolve of the Salvadorian Government to deal with the many problems it faced.

10. Mr. HAMMARBERG asked the Salvadorian delegation what steps the Government was taking to combat the sale of children. According to an article published in The Observer on Sunday, 10 September 1993, there were "casas de engorde" (houses for fattening up children) in El Salvador, where newborn babies, preferably light-skinned male, were groomed, pampered, fed a rich diet, and then sold for from £7,000 to £10,000 to adoptive parents from North America and Europe. Those establishments were run by lawyers working with nurses and wet-nurses. The children were purchased for a sum equivalent to £200, either from persons who had kidnapped them, or from their parents. Had the Salvadorian Government conducted an inquiry into the fate of the 50 children from the village of San Antonio de la Cruz who had been taken away on 1 June 1982 by the army? The soldiers had allegedly told the mothers of those children that they planned to sell them to North Americans. Did the Salvadorian Government, as a general rule, attempt to elucidate the tragic events that had transpired during the armed conflict?

11. Mrs. SANTOS PAIS said that she would appreciate clarification on the precise meaning of the term "minors in an irregular situation" (see para. 104 of the report). In what kind of institutions were they placed? Did they come into contact with common criminals?

12. Mr. MENDOZA (El Salvador) said that no sooner had the Salvadorian Government discovered the existence of the "casas de engorde", than it had halted all adoption proceedings for two months, and instituted investigative proceedings against the lawyers implicated in the traffic in children. Generally speaking, the Salvadorian Government investigated all incidents that had occurred during the armed conflict. He was regrettably unaware of the abduction of the 50 children mentioned by Mr. Hammarberg. He would consult his Government on that matter and would forward a written reply to the Committee.

13. Replying to Mrs. Santos Pais, he stated that "minors in an irregular situation" were children whose behaviour was antisocial. They were mostly youths who belonged to gangs that practised extreme violence, especially among themselves. Their problems were of a serious nature, and the authorities worked in cooperation with parents to resolve them. If, however, such children were repeat offenders, they were placed in special institutions. Juveniles convicted of crimes were never incarcerated with adult common criminals.

14. The CHAIRPERSON invited the Salvadorian delegation to reply to questions 1, 3 and 6 of the list of issues (CRC/C/4/WP.6) in the section concerning basic health and welfare. Those questions read as follows:

> "1. What proportion of the budget is allocated to health care and more specifically to child health?
>
> ...
>
> 3. Please provide information on the situation of disabled children, including access to education, training, health-care services, preparation for employment and recreation opportunities.
>
> ...
>
> 6. Please indicate to what extent plans to improve the system of education and training for health personnel have been implemented (para. 221 of the report)."

15. Mr. MENDOZA (El Salvador) said that his Government's policy on economic, social and cultural rights consisted in meeting the objectives established by the World Summit for Children in the areas of housing, health and nutrition. In reply to question 1, he said that health was the main item in the national budget. Great efforts had had to be made to quell the cholera epidemic that had been raging for two years. Those included transporting clean drinking water into remote areas, and encouraging the use of latrines to prevent the transmission of infections, in general, and of cholera in particular.

16. Question 3 concerned the situation of disabled children. Activities undertaken on their behalf, which focused on achieving the recognition of their rights, were founded on various legal principles and international instruments. El Salvador was attempting to elaborate a strategy for the recognition of the rights of those children to rehabilitation and social reintegration, especially in the area of employment. If, however, significant numbers of such children were to be successfully rehabilitated, awareness campaigns and appeals for international assistance would need to be launched. Efforts were being made to prevent discrimination in education, to ensure that disabled children were treated with dignity, and to provide them with access to, inter alia, leisure activities, buildings and means of transport. Furthermore, recreation programmes were used to prepare disabled children for social reintegration.

17. Turning to question 6, he said that training for health personnel was offered in some health centres and hospitals, as well as at the nursing school, a high-level educational institution. Nursing training was also offered at the university. Most male and female nurses who entered that profession did so out of a sense of vocation, and nursing schools emphasized the set of values upon which their work should be grounded. Continuing education in nursing was also available. Communication with patients was an important aspect of the work of both male and female nurses. An effort was made to inculcate in health-care professionals a high degree of professionalism and a sense of human dignity. Training institutions did not, however, suffice; adequate resources were needed to put the skills of such personnel to use.

18. Mgr. BAMBAREN GASTELUMENDI asked how budgetary resources were apportioned by region, and among the capital, the principal cities and the rest of the country. Since malnutrition was the principal cause of maternal death, what priority was accorded to the provision of services to that situation? He applauded El Salvador for the considerable commitment it had shown to its vaccination campaigns, even during the period of conflict. Even in areas beset by violence, guerrilla movements had cooperated with those campaigns. That example might indeed serve as inspiration for other countries. Further information on health care for mothers and children would also be welcome. At the preceding meeting, the Salvadorian representative had stressed the importance of the role played by community banks. It was conceivable, in view of that country's economic situation, that those institutions might dispense health-care services. Could the Salvadorian delegation provide information on that point?

19. Mr. MOMBESHORA thanked the Salvadorian delegation for its replies. He hoped that more detailed answers to certain questions would be provided at a later date. With regard to disabled children, for example, while statistics could perhaps not be furnished at once, such information might usefully be forwarded later. How were prevention and treatment respectively ranked in priority on the budget? The emphasis probably fell on treatment, in view of the severity of the problems encountered. If, however, progress was to be made in the area of health care, more emphasis must be placed on preventive measures.

20. Was the current resurgence of tuberculosis linked to HIV infection? What was the situation regarding HIV infection in El Salvador? How was the virus transmitted. Was the network of 390 health-care units described in paragraph 113 of the report made up of hospitals or clinics? What sort of personnel staffed those units? The report also indicated high rates of neonatal and infant mortality. Were they attributable to inadequate access to hospitals and clinics, or to lack of follow up in the post-natal phase? The report provided no information on dental care; could the Salvadorian delegation provide information on that point?

21. Mrs. EUFEMIO applauded the broad coverage achieved by the vaccination campaigns. Measures for the early detection of disabilities were perhaps, however, insufficient, especially in cases where vaccinations failed. At times, disabilities had social implications, such as the tendency of parents to conceal their child's disability for fear of being criticized for the way

in which they had cared for him. What strategy was being followed or planned for launching a system for the early detection of disabilities, assisting families in coming to terms with them, and providing adequate care to such children?

22. Mr. HAMMARBERG asked to what extent rehabilitation programmes had been launched at the community level to deal with disabilities after their detection. In very poor countries, inexpensive methods with wide potential coverage should be employed. WHO, which administered an interesting programme in that regard, could certainly provide assistance to El Salvador.

23. According to the available statistics, access to drinking water in rural areas constituted a serious problem. The infant mortality rate was also exceedingly high, even by comparison with other countries of the region. Apparently, the importance of breast-feeding was insufficiently understood. According to the figures, the duration of the breast-feeding phase was extremely short. Furthermore, the lack of statistics on maternal mortality was regrettable since such data was important in developing strategy for broadly improving health.

24. The Salvadorian delegation had discussed physical rehabilitation and social reintegration. Psychological rehabilitation must, however, be stressed as well, especially in view of the tragic experiences of many children. In view of that country's poverty, individual therapy could probably not be dispensed to large numbers of children. Yet solutions must be found; it should be possible to employ methods that were both effective and inexpensive.

25. Mrs. SARDENBERG said that, while services were concentrated in the capital, those most hard hit by malnutrition were children in rural areas. What steps were the authorities taking to respond to the needs of the poorest residents of those areas?

26. El Salvador had made great efforts to reduce the infant mortality rate. That rate was no longer the highest in Central America, and had even dropped to the lowest after Costa Rica. Paragraph 116 of the report indicated, however, that the morbidity and mortality rates were three times higher for the population of displaced persons than for the remainder of the population. Had the strides made affected the population of displaced persons?

27. Finally, it was known that a great many of the health programmes administered in El Salvador came within the context of international cooperation. Was El Salvador conducting a more detailed evaluation of the international cooperation it received? Were efforts being made to redirect the allocation of resources or certain types of cooperation and assistance?

28. Mr. KOLOSOV asked whether El Salvador had a system of mandatory medical check-ups for children; no mention of any such was made in the report. Did such a system exist or did children go to hospitals and clinics only when they fell sick? If such a system did exist, did children benefit from it? Did it operate in both urban and rural areas?

29. Mr. MENDOZA (El Salvador), replying to the questions put by the members of the Committee, said that services were concentrated in the capital largely because of the concentration of population there, which had further increased as a result of the armed conflict. Although the capital boasted several good hospitals, the significant population increase interfered with the provision of adequate care to children.

30. Although setting up a system of mandatory medical check-ups for children was a difficult problem, efforts were being made to ensure that the child's growth and development were adequately monitored from the time of birth. There was a link between that regular monitoring and the exemplary vaccination campaigns that had been carried out in El Salvador. There were plans to conduct medical check-ups in schools so that children could be sent to hospitals for treatment if necessary. Medical check-ups would also be conducted before entry into secondary school, in particular. That was part of a strategy to organize regular medical check-ups for children. While there were large hospitals in some areas of the country, medical coverage was clearly not complete. When health problems arose, the capital's good infrastructure gave it an advantage over the interior. Children could now benefit from the new social security system and receive treatment in the well-equipped and technologically advanced social security hospitals. Although currently the emphasis indeed fell more on treatment than on prevention, efforts were being made to develop prevention programmes, since in the long run they were more efficient and less costly. In the area of prevention, El Salvador enjoyed the support of a number of organizations, among them the United States Cross-Country Association and Médecins Sans Frontières.

31. With regard to disabled children, it was true that community based strategies could prove effective in the early detection of disabilities, as well as in encouraging families to stop concealing the disabilities of their children and to have them treated. Importantly, measures must also be taken to prevent the social discrimination against disabled children.

32. With regard to psychological rehabilitation, El Salvador could benefit from the experience of other countries that had encountered similar difficulties in implementing appropriate measures. Much remained to be done; the medical and nursing schools were tackling that problem.

33. A number of questions had been raised about the infant mortality rates, in particular that of the displaced population. During the armed conflict in El Salvador, those rates had been very high among that population group. With the conclusion of the conflict, however, the problem could be more effectively addressed. Strategies for meeting the needs of displaced persons were being implemented as part of the regional recovery plan. But if the infant mortality rate was to be reduced, much effort and greater international cooperation would be required. International cooperation had fallen far short of expectations, particularly with regard to the assistance that the country would need to meet the costly obligations that ensued from the peace agreements, especially for the reintegration of demobilized persons. Furthermore, the worldwide resurgence of tuberculosis had also been observed in El Salvador. Efforts were being made to combat that illness, but the bacillus had grown resistant to the available vaccines. There were

health-care centres specialized in combating tuberculosis. Programmes to improve child dental and oral hygiene involved the cooperation of nursery-school teachers and parents, and fluoride was added to the water supply to help prevent caries. Furthermore, consideration was being given to ways of improving the technical and medical training, and thereby the performance, of midwives, who played a crucial role in El Salvador.

34. Mr. KOLOSOV asked if Salvadorian children of pre-school age were given medical check-ups. If so, starting at what age?

35. Mr. MOMBESHORA, recalling that the worldwide resurgence of tuberculosis was linked to HIV infection, asked whether that phenomenon had also emerged among the Salvadorian child population, despite the information and vaccination campaigns carried out by the Government of that country.

36. Mgr. BAMBAREN GASTELUMENDI asked what role was played by the community banks in the area of health, in view of El Salvador's budgetary constraints. Malnutrition and anaemia, the principal causes of maternal mortality, also affected newborn infants; he regretted that international cooperation had, in that regard, proven inadequate.

37. The CHAIRPERSON invited Mr. Mendoza to provide additional information on those points.

38. Mr. MENDOZA (El Salvador), replying to Mr. Kolosov, affirmed that children of pre-school age should receive medical check-ups, but that parents often balked. Accordingly, the vaccination campaigns encouraged parents to take their children to health centres, where treatment could be dispensed.

39. In reply to Mr. Mombeshora, he said that tuberculosis was in fact spreading in El Salvador. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the resurgence was attributable mainly to the fact that existing vaccines were no longer effective.

40. With regard to the role played by the community banks in the area of health, the National Secretariat for the Family had, in cooperation with those institutions, established a credit system for disadvantaged persons, who had previously been obliged to borrow from independent lenders at high interest rates. Replying to Mgr. Bambaren Gastelumendi's second question, he said that poverty was indeed a factor in malnutrition and anaemia. Accordingly, a glass of milk was distributed daily to each child in school. Furthermore, the Central American Nutrition Institute, which was based in Guatemala, had launched a regional nutrition programme which featured such low-cost products as icaparina, a balanced source of nutrition for children.

41. The CHAIRPERSON suggested, in view of the lack of time, proceeding to questions 2, 3 and 4 in the section entitled "Education, leisure and cultural activities", which read as follows:

> "2. What is being done to facilitate school attendance for children in remote areas?

3. What is the real cost for the family of having a child in school at the different levels and how does it affect the school attendance of children from poor families?

4. Please indicate whether children may be taught in indigenous or minority languages."

42. Mr. MENDOZA (El Salvador), replying to question 2, stated that the provision of meals to students had served to promote school attendance, which nevertheless remained low. In fact, while schools were free and open to all, attendance entailed costs for parents. A national adult literacy campaign was being conducted under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), to convince parents of the importance of literacy; that programme bore the name of the Salvadorian man of letters Alberto Masferrer, who in the 1930s had championed the cause of literacy in Latin America. Furthermore, schools were being built in remote regions, and those destroyed during the war were under reconstruction.

43. With regard to question 4, he said that he would reply in connection with question 9 under "Special protection measures".

44. Mr. HAMMARBERG said that, regrettably, despite the literacy campaign, 400,000 Salvadorian children were not enrolled in school and only 23 per cent completed primary school. Furthermore, the statistics showed that the school system suffered from sex-based discrimination. If it was to surmount those problems, however, El Salvador needed resources, a fact which demonstrated the extent to which child education, one of the central issues of the current discussion, was fundamentally a problem of budget.

45. Mrs. MASON, referring to paragraph 150 and to paragraph 232 (e) of the report (CRC/C/3/Add.9), asked whether any recreation programmes or projects were under way.

46. Mgr. BAMBAREN GASTELUMENDI asked whether El Salvador had developed remedial programmes for adults who were of school age during the conflict.

47. Mrs. EUFEMIO requested further information on any out-of-school literacy measures, such as mobile schools. Did El Salvador, like other developing countries, offer programmes for parents, and more particularly mothers, that trained them to teach their children to read and write, so as to ease the shortage of teachers?

48. Mr. KOLOSOV asked what was the average salary of a schoolteacher. How did it rank beside that of other professions?

49. Mr. MENDOZA (El Salvador), replying to Mrs. Mason, said that the Family Code upheld the right of children to leisure and games. With the return of peace to El Salvador, children could play in the street. In and around San Salvador, parents and children could again frequent the public parks. With regard to remedial courses, the Government took account of the cases of children and adults who had been obliged to study on their own, during the conflict and equivalency diplomas were issued.

50. Turning to the question put by Mrs. Eufemio, he said that instruction was provided, within the framework of agrarian reform, to communities attached to particular estates. Furthermore, it was hoped that Salvadorian students, like those of other Latin American countries, would contribute to the literacy effort.

51. Salaries for teachers, a subject about which Mr. Kolosov had requested information, were comparable to those earned by other middle-class salaried workers. In that regard, the Minister of Education intended to increase salaries to counter the temptation for teachers to work double shifts to make ends meet. The teaching profession had a scale of advancement: as teachers rose up it, their salaries steadily increased.

52. Mr. HAMMARBERG said that he was dissatisfied by the excessively long and vague replies of the Salvadorian representative; he deeply regretted that the discussion between the Committee and the Salvadorian delegation could not be conducted at a suitable level.

53. The CHAIRPERSON said that the members of the Committee shared the misgivings expressed by Mr. Hammarberg and asked Mr. Mendoza to attempt to respond concisely and clearly to questions 1, 2, 4, 6, 8 and 9 in the final section of the list of questions, entitled "Special protection measures".

"(a) Children in situations of emergency

(Arts. 22, 38 and 39 of the Convention)

1. To what extent is the Government's policy towards refugee children and displaced children consistent with the principles of non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, the right of survival and development and the respect for the views of the child?

2. What concrete programmes are there for assisting children who have returned to their home areas after the war?

(b) Children in conflict with the law

(Arts. 37, 40 and 39 of the Convention)

4. Please provide detailed information on the system of administration of juvenile justice and on the situation of children in conflict with the law, and on the progress made in implementing the legislative and other measures mentioned in the report.

(c) Children in situations of exploitation

(Arts. 32, 33, 34, 35, 36 and 39 of the Convention)

6. With reference to paragraph 206 of the report, please indicate whether the Government intends to ratify ILO Convention No. 138 or other ILO Conventions relating to minimum age for employment and whether technical assistance would be useful in this regard?

8. The report mentions existing and planned measures to combat the exploitation of children in situations such as the sale or use of drugs, social exploitation and abuse, including prostitution, sale, trafficking and abduction. Please provide information on the progress made in implementing these measures.

(d) Children belonging to minorities or indigenous groups

(Art. 30 of the Convention)

9. Please provide information on children belonging to minorities or indigenous groups. What affirmative action is being taken to ensure that these children are not discriminated against in the enjoyment of their rights?"

54. In reply to question 1, Mr. MENDOZA (El Salvador) said that he had already explained that his country had many displaced persons but no refugees, and that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) coordinated all programmes on behalf of those persons. The Salvadorian Government had developed several programmes on behalf of children within the framework of the National Reconstruction Plan.

55. Turning to question 2, he said that concrete programmes also came within the purview of the National Reconstruction Plan.

56. In reply to question 4, he said that the Ministry of Justice was taking many measures to ensure that juvenile offenders should be separated from adult prisoners. A draft law on minors had been formulated for the application in El Salvador of all the principles contained in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

57. Turning to question 6, he noted that articles of the Salvadorian Constitution echoed those of ILO Convention No. 138 concerning the minimum employment age; the Salvadorian Constitution and that ILO Convention were thus not at odds. Furthermore, the Salvadorian Government was prepared to sign other ILO conventions.

58. Turning to question 8, he acknowledged that, regrettably children were exploited in his country; the Government was still not in a position to tackle all the many related problems. The victims were mainly young adolescents. He had asked the Deputy Government Procurator for the Defence of the Rights of the Child to transmit to the Committee on the Rights of the Child all information pertinent to that question.

59. In reply to question 9, he stated that El Salvador was a mestizo country with few indigenous minorities. Steps were being taken to permit the Nahuatl minority to use its own language. Many indigenous groups, however, sought to assimilate, and some older Nahuatl could speak but not write their language. The Salvadorian Government was working to foster those aspects of indigenous life that formed part of the cultural heritage of the nation.

60. The CHAIRPERSON thanked the representative of El Salvador for his concise replies, and invited the members of the Committee to offer their comments.

61. With regard to question 2, Mrs. EUFEMIO said that she would appreciate information on mine-clearing programmes in El Salvador. Were there psychotherapy programmes for child victims of the violence that had torn the country? Did that country have trained professionals specialized in the problem of reintegrating those children into their families and communities so as to facilitate their normal development, and, if so, how many?

62. Mrs. SANTOS PAIS said that information would be welcome on the administration of juvenile justice. According to the initial report, the existing system should fully conform to the procedure set forth in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, but did it in fact do so? Did children over the age of 16 have recourse to any special protection procedure? The report made no mention of articles 37 or 40 of the Convention, which provided for special protection measures for minors. Finally, she asked whether the criminal system applied to children in irregular situations.

63. Mrs. MASON asked whether protection measures were provided for children under the age of 16 who had committed a criminal offence and whether the Salvadorian Government was conducting programmes to halt the sexual exploitation of boys.

64. Mgr. BAMBAREN GASTELUMENDI said that he was troubled by the situation of street children. How many such children were there? Were measures taken to help them and make the public aware of the problem?

65. Mr. MOMBESHORA asked what protection was afforded to minorities whose rights were violated, since El Salvador had no special law that concerned children belonging to ethnic or indigenous groups and the Constitution and the Minors' Code provided for the equality of all persons before the law.

66. Mr. HAMMARBERG noted with satisfaction El Salvador's readiness to ratify ILO Convention No. 138 and other similar conventions concerning the minimum employment age.

67. Mr. MENDOZA (El Salvador), replying to Mrs. Eufemio, said that a mine-clearing programme had been established, as stipulated by the Peace Agreements in force; children, admittedly, were often the principal victims of violence. Programmes in psychotherapy and social reintegration were offered by professionals trained in child social work at the university.

68. Replying to the question put by Mrs. Santos Pais and Mrs. Mason concerning children in conflict with the law, he stated that children under the age of 16 who had committed a criminal offence were protected. Juvenile offenders from 16 to 18 years old benefited from a special programme separating them from adults and providing special treatment to ensure their rehabilitation and social reintegration. He furthermore assured Mrs. Mason that cases of minors and child victims of sexual violence were heard by Juvenile Courts, without distinction as to the sex of the child.

69. Replying to Mgr. Bambaren Gastelumendi, he said that the National Secretariat for the Family had launched programmes to reintegrate street children into society and prepare them for the labour market.

70. With regard to the question on the protection of minorities, he stated that the Salvadorian Constitution guaranteed respect for the rights of minorities; he further inquired whether Mr. Mombeshora had religious minorities or specific categories in mind.

71. The CHAIRPERSON asked the members of the Committee for general observations on the initial report of El Salvador (CRC/C/3/Add.9).

72. Mrs. SANTOS PAIS stated that the report of El Salvador was an objective analysis of the situation of the rights of the child in that country. It had in fact acknowledged weaknesses in several areas: information on children's rights, resources, technical training of persons responsible for the administration of justice, and so forth. She noted with satisfaction that the report had been prepared on the basis of broad consultations with governmental bodies, the judiciary included. In her view, however, NGOs could play a greater role in that process. Furthermore, it was unclear by what procedure the Convention on the Rights of the Child could be invoked in the courts. What was the true status of the Convention in relation to the national legal system?

73. She also urged the Salvadorian delegation to submit a core document addressing the fundamental aspects of the question of the application of human rights in El Salvador. The information furnished in the initial report was for the most part inadequate and did not permit an assessment to be made of the application of the rights of the child in El Salvador. The fate of children in irregular situations was a matter of particular concern; she failed to understand clearly the criteria applied to them.

74. Mr. MOMBESHORA thanked the Salvadorian delegation for its efforts to establish a dialogue with the Committee on the Rights of the Child. It was most regrettable, however, nevertheless that the information provided in both the written report and the oral replies was inadequate. Statistics on the number of displaced persons and their whereabouts, urban and rural, would be useful. He acknowledged that El Salvador was undergoing a difficult period of transition from war to peace and had a great many problems to solve. Finally, the interests of the child were in fact taken into consideration in the various programmes in effect.

75. Mr. KOLOSOV said that, for his part, he was troubled by the lack of coordination among the various governmental administrations and services; the inefficient use of scarce resources; the insufficient training provided to carers for child-care personnel; the physical and sexual violence inflicted on minors; the not wholly satisfactory definition of the child put forward by the Salvadorian delegation; the existence of voluntary military service for minors between the ages of 16 and 18; the shortcomings in the education laws; the traffic in children; and the problem of juvenile delinquency. It was encouraging, however, that the Salvadorian authorities acknowledged the existence of such problems, as both the introduction and the conclusions of their report attested. He urged the Salvadorian Government to accord priority to children despite the admittedly serious social, economic and political problems it faced.

76. Mr. HAMMARBERG applauded the decision taken by the Salvadorian authorities to launch an information campaign on children's rights, to create organizations for the promotion and protection of those rights, and to embark on reassessing the relevant legislation. It was clear that the country faced major difficulties in the aftermath of the war, and that the international community had been reluctant to assist with its reconstruction. It was, however disturbing that the implementation of article 4 of the Convention, whereby States parties undertook to take measures within the limits of their resources, left much to be desired. The statistics were alarming; and urgent measures must be taken to prevent the marginalization of children. Furthermore, the Salvadorian authorities must work to more effectively combat discriminatory attitudes based on sex. Finally, violence in the home and the employment of children were problems that continued to cause concern. All that notwithstanding, the Committee should appeal to the international community to support more effectively the reconstruction efforts undertaken by El Salvador since the conclusion of the war.

77. Mrs. EUFEMIO said that that country should work to overcome the negative attitude of adults towards children. The country's characteristic machismo, the failure of the Salvadorian authorities to send a government representative to present their report to the Committee, and the involvement of lawyers in the traffic in children were all manifestations of that attitude. That sort of attitude could not be changed by simply amending legislation. Parents in particular, should be made aware of their responsibilities, which would mean developing a strategy for the reeducation of adults. Furthermore, the effectiveness of the new laws, strategies and administrative measures enacted or envisaged by the Salvadorian authorities could not be assessed without reliable figures, especially with regard to the number of children concerned.

78. Mrs. SARDENBERG expressed the hope that the Salvadorian authorities would indeed transmit written replies to the Committee. In her view, the programmes they had developed were very ambitious, and should be monitored to evaluate their scope and effectiveness. The lack of coordination among the various governmental administrations and services vis-à-vis the promotion of children's rights was regrettable. Furthermore, a comparison between measures taken in rural and urban areas would have been welcome in the report. She agreed with Mr. Hammarberg that the international community must be alerted to the need to provide sufficient aid for the reconstruction of El Salvador.

79. Miss MASON said that, in her view, El Salvador had failed to provide all the information requested by the Committee. The Convention provided, however, for the submission of a further report within five years: that new document would allow an assessment to be made of both the advances made and the efficacy of the programmes implemented by the Salvadorian authorities. It should be stressed that progress could be much better evaluated if a thorough census was taken in El Salvador. It was regrettable that the report had made no mention of the traditional practices and cultural customs concerning, for instance, the role of the child in the family.

80. Mgr. BAMBAREN GASTELUMENDI congratulated the Salvadorian Ambassador for rising to the occasion despite the absence of direct information from his capital. However, it should not be forgotten that the distressing poverty of El Salvador, underlay many problems. Another likewise distressing problem

which must also be borne in mind was the mental health of children affected by the war. He also stressed the need to develop special education programmes for parents, to do the utmost to implement article 4 of the Convention, and to involve families, as such, in the country's reconstruction.

81. The CHAIRPERSON said that formal consideration of the initial report of El Salvador (CRC/C/3/Add.9) was concluded. She expressed the hope that the Salvadorian authorities would transmit to the Committee detailed written replies to the questions raised and that those replies would be presented in the form of a written report by a delegation from the Salvadorian capital, made up of persons involved in the preparation and implementation of programmes for children. Their report should include accurate statistical data covering all the various aspects of the Convention. It should address, as well, the strategy for social mobilization and the role of NGOs and children in implementing the Convention and promoting human rights. Information should also be included on any strides made by the Salvadorian authorities with regard to the budget, the training of professionals, legislative measures concerning special situations encountered by children, and the system for monitoring and evaluating regional programmes.

82. The Committee was, however, encouraged by El Salvador's rapid and unconditional ratification of the Convention, by the submission of its initial report on the date stipulated and by the efforts undertaken by that Government since the conclusion of the war, despite the objective difficulties it faced. International cooperation, which was necessary for the reconstruction of the country, could not effectively be provided until a national mobilization strategy had been defined. Finally, the Committee welcomed the fact that the Salvadorian delegation had risen to the challenge of appearing before it in the absence of representatives from its capital, and had engaged in a constructive dialogue with Committee members.

83. Mr. MENDOZA (El Salvador) assured the Committee that he would transmit its observations and recommendations to his Government. He recalled that he had undertaken to transmit to the Committee the responses of the Salvadorian Government, along with the other promised documents. Lastly, he reminded the Committee that the Family Code, based, by and large, on the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, was soon to be adopted; that new legislative text could only improve the situation of the rights of the child in El Salvador.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.